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# municipal recreation bulletin

Ministry of Community and Social Services
Youth and Recreation Branch

## The administration and operation of the municipal recreation service

Members of a municipal recreation committee are appointed by the municipal council and are responsible to the council for the administration and operation of the recreation program and facilities of the community.

The municipal recreation committee usually has few precedents to guide it when it starts out to administer the municipal recreation service. There is no one system that will work perfectly in all communities. However, one principle applies everywhere—

*The primary aim of the municipal recreation committee is to assure adequate opportunity for any man, woman or child in the community to engage in satisfying and constructive recreational activities appropriate to his or her age and personal interest.*

The municipal council should provide its recreation committee with complete terms of reference for the administration and operation of the recreation program. These terms will vary from community to community but will always be based on the by-law by which the committee was established and the direct responsibilities of the committee. The types of direct committee responsibilities that are typical in Ontario communities are outlined in this bulletin.

## Municipal recreation committee direct responsibilities

1
Establish immediate and long-range goals for assisting recreation. Local factors must be considered:

- nature of the community
- extent and types of recreational activities being provided
- sources and availability of money
- long-range plans for future development of the particular locality and the area.

2
Determine routine procedures and working plans

- An established order of business for meetings and a routine for handling correspondence, invoices and requests will make the job of the municipal recreation committee easier and more effective.

3
Formulate and recommend to the municipal council a policy covering the municipal role in recreation.

Faced with formulating or changing policy, the municipal recreation committee should ask:

- Is the idea a good one for this community at this time? Is it consistent with what a municipal agency should be doing in the field of recreation? What is the predictable future effect on the community?
- Is the idea economically feasible? Does it represent an expanding demand on public funds in future years? If so, is it justifiable? If it is a plan or project, would it require total and continuous financial support from the municipal government? Would it need partial supporting assistance? Would the municipal agency initiate the plan, and then expect the participants ultimately to assume the responsibilities of operation? Whom does it serve? Are there alternative methods of financing? Does this represent a logical expenditure of public funds? Are there forms of assistance other than direct financing that the committee might offer?

4
Devise a method of reporting to the municipal council

The municipal recreation committee may find that forwarding a copy of the minutes of each of their meetings does the job. Some will submit quarterly reports. Others will submit an annual report. The method used should be in keeping with municipal practices, but should be positive and enthusiastic, and indicate the value of the program to the most important part of the community—the people.

5
Know about all the recreational activities in the community

The municipal recreation committee cannot deal with the recreation of the community unless it knows

about existing activities, and understands conditions that affect local recreation. Information can be obtained through the leaders of the special interest groups in the community, the local press, municipal clerk, school authorities, churches, clubs and other organized groups, the welfare council and other agencies, organizations and institutions. Collecting this information can be the beginning of good public relations between the recreation committee and the groups concerned.

**6**

Assist community groups and organizations to plan and conduct their own recreational activities

Each of the voluntary groups in a community contributes to the leisure-time living of the people. Their programs and activities represent a part of the recreational opportunities, and many have become traditional in the life of the community. Here are some examples of the kinds of assistance that can be offered through the municipal recreation committee and its professional staff:

- Leadership development—Community recreation, or any other community activity, has a continuing need for competent leaders. The municipal recreation committee is interested in leaders who are active in any form of community recreation. These people may be contributing to public recreation or to the recreational activities of the church, school, YMCA, union, or other local organization. They are the vital forces in the recreation of the community.

One of the most important services of the municipal recreation committee is to develop training opportunities for these leaders. Either under its own sponsorship, or in cooperation with other agencies, it can encourage the establishment of leadership training opportunities that will meet the various needs in the community. A variety of training opportunities can be offered and assistance in planning can be arranged by contacting the Consultant, Youth and Recreation, located in the Regional office of the Department of Education.

- Advisory and consultation service—The municipal recreation committee can act as consultant to many community groups that sponsor recreation programs. All the local organizations should be made aware of this service and encouraged to use it. Such a service might provide advice about program planning; advice on appropriate facilities and equipment for a particular activity; advice about organization, planning and operation of projects; assist groups to evaluate their programs; advise groups about planning and resources for training; offer the advantages of experience and knowledge.

The municipal recreation committee should consider it one of the major responsibilities of its professional staff to act as consultants to local groups.

- Coordinated planning through conferences—Recreation is for everyone! The development of recreational opportunities for men, women and children is a problem, not for any one organization, but for the entire community.

Community clubs and organizations try to meet a part of this need. To each of these groups, and to the community as a whole, there are advantages in mutual assistance and understanding.

*The municipal recreation committee can provide a valuable service by encouraging local groups and individuals to coordinate some of their planning and action in recreation.*

How can the municipal recreation committee make this cooperation possible? How can the committee bring about coordination in the community without appearing to "push people around"? One solution could be in some form of conference where people can discuss and plan recreational activities. See bulletin number 13 on community conferences.

- Information service—The municipal recreation committee can be a valuable source of information and reference material that local groups might need to plan and operate their recreation programs.

Information may be provided directly through interviews or correspondence by the committee's professional recreation staff.

A reference library could be developed and maintained for use by various recreation leaders. Books, periodicals, reports on recreational subjects, the philosophy of recreation, leadership principles and techniques, rulebooks, "how-to-do-it" manuals, program suggestions are all useful. In some communities, the municipal recreation committee encourages and assists the public library to provide this service for recreation groups.

A film information service might recommend recreation films for groups, and indicate where they may be obtained. In some cases, the municipal recreation committee purchases a few key films for local use. If there is a film council in the area, there is an opportunity for effective cooperation in this specialized service.

Booklets, manuals and bulletins from the Youth and Recreation Branch should be channelled by the committee to the appropriate community groups.

• Publicity service—It can be an important function of the municipal recreation committee to make sure people know about activities and future plans in recreation. The local newspaper, radio and television station should be kept informed. In addition, the committee may issue folders, bulletins, circular letters or other materials.

• Equipment, facilities and resources—In many communities the availability of equipment, facilities and resources becomes an acute problem. A "suitable" recreation facility must meet at least the minimum requirements for that activity and must be reasonably accessible to the people it serves.

The municipal recreation committee is particularly concerned with the extent of recreation facilities, and the use made of them. It should have a list and description of all of the indoor and outdoor spaces that can be used. Some may be owned by the municipality, some by private agencies or institutions, some by commercial interests. The municipal recreation committee is interested in how the accommodation can be used and under what conditions it is available. See bulletin number 9 in this series.

• Financial assistance—Most of the assistance provided to voluntary groups through the municipal recreation committee is in the form of service rather than financial grants. Only a few instances have been noted where there has been continuing direct financial assistance from the municipal recreation committee to a local recreation group. See bulletin number 5, Financing Recreation, in this series.

Let the municipal recreation committee remember that *encouraging and assisting voluntary groups is one of the most important services that the municipal recreation authority can offer.*

It is neither possible nor desirable for a municipal authority to plan, organize and operate all of the recreational activities in a community. Recreation, particularly for adults, is a personal matter, and people tend to resist any interference in their private ways of life. Whether it be sports, art, music, crafts, or any other leisure activity, recreation belongs to the participants.

**7**

The municipal recreation committee operates those recreational activities that are most effectively handled by a municipal agency, taking complete responsibility for the planning, organization, administration, leadership and financing associated with the activity.

Different communities will operate different types of programs depending on their size, geographical location, wealth, the attitudes of their citizens, and the kinds of recreational activities being conducted by voluntary agencies. The municipal recreation committee must decide to what extent it will assume the full responsibility for conducting recreational programs.

Certain types of recreation are usually accepted as being the natural responsibility of the municipal authority. In these cases the question is not whether to operate but rather how to operate. When the municipal recreation committee becomes aware of a specific recreational need in the community, it can approach the problem in several different ways:

• it may sponsor and operate a program that will meet the need

• it may encourage and assist an agency in the community to provide leadership and operate the program

• it may bring the interested people together and help them develop their own organization and program.

The first of these suggestions may seem the easiest way, but it leaves much of the initiative and the responsibility to the local government, and contributes less toward developing an independent leadership among the people concerned.

It may also brand the municipal recreation committee a "program agency" and bring it into competition with other community groups such as schools, churches, YMCA, service clubs and others. The long-range success of municipal recreation depends to a great extent on the sound judgment of the municipal recreation committee and its staff when they tackle these problems:

• when and how to become an operator in a specific recreation program

• when and how to guide and assist other operating agencies.

As a direct operator, the municipal recreation committee is particularly interested in recreation programs and projects that serve the entire community; serve all the people in a particular age group; require a type of facility that is difficult to construct or expensive to maintain.

Many types of recreation, particularly those for adults, need stimulation and encouragement, initial organization, special equipment or facilities, leadership and early guidance. The development of such programs raises some special problems. For instance, how to develop a group to the point of independence. How to bring about the transition from municipal to voluntary operation. How to make sure that the group, after it has become independent, will still help to provide a service to the whole community in that particular activity.

**8**
The committee should act as a channel of communication

An obvious value of the municipal recreation committee is that it can serve community recreation by obtaining and passing on information related to recreational interests.

**9**
Administration of public funds allocated for recreation

Who pays for what? And why? The healthy growth of municipal recreation depends on how these questions are answered. During a period in which municipal recreation is expanding rapidly, precedents are being established. The total amount of each recreation budget and the kind of expenditures it recommends, will affect future development in municipal recreation. See bulletin number 5 on financing recreation.

## Organizing to do the job

As a community increases in size, the work of the municipal recreation committee becomes more complex. At meetings each member must discuss and decide many unrelated problems. This tends to become an increasing load on the time, efforts, and versatility of individual members. Some municipal recreation committees have found that business can be conducted efficiently if the responsibilities are divided into separate "portfolios" such as: program and services; facilities and equipment; finance.

The portfolios may be handled by individual members of the committee, or by sub-committees. Sub-committee chairman are usually members of the recreation committee, but specially qualified and willing people may be added to the sub-committees as members who act in an advisory capacity.

The sub-division of the committee's job, the addition of advisory members to sub-committees, and any other methods used to facilitate the work and improve the services, should never detract from the primary aim and legal responsibility of the municipal recreation committee. Sub-committees and individual portfolios should be used as a means of making the committee more effective, and should never be allowed to divide the committee into special-interest groups. The members of the committee should try to work together harmoniously, and be prepared to consider the advice and assistance provided by the citizens who act in an advisory capacity.

The municipal recreation committee should remember that advice and assistance is available from the Youth and Recreation Consultant for their community.

## A municipal recreation committee policy manual—suggested content

**1**
The municipal recreation by-law

**2**
Primary aim of the municipal recreation committee

**3**
Responsibilities of the municipal recreation committee

- duties, portfolios
- method of appointing officers and sub-committees
- rules of order for meetings
- meeting dates

**4**
Responsibilities of the recreation staff

- director, assistant director, supervisors and others
- lines of communication and lines of authority
- terms of reference for full-time, part-time and volunteer staff
- relationships associated with each position

**5**
Leadership training
- conferences and institutes approved for staff attendance
- policy for training of volunteer leaders

**6**
Recreation programs
- policy of assistance to groups (organization, leadership, secretarial services, facilities, etc.)
- policy related to programs of autonomous groups
- travel for teams

**7**
Recreation facilities
- agreements with agencies, school board, park authorities, arena boards
- data and policy on rinks, tot lots, playgrounds, day-camp areas, etc.
- rental of facilities to community groups—arena ice-time, auditoriums, pools, etc.

**8**
Finances
- budget preparation and procedures
- approval of expenditures and accounts.
- fees to non-residents
- grants to community groups
- sponsorship of youth and adult groups

**9**
Statement of administration policies.

**10**
Notes on legislation affecting recreation
- municipal by-laws that affect the policy or operation of the recreation committee should be quoted at the appropriate point in the policy manual
- The Department of Education Act and the regulation governing programs of recreation
- The Community Centres Act and its regulations
- The Parks Act (the relevant excerpt)
- The Municipal Act (the relevant excerpts)
- The Schools Administration Act
- others.